

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING CONCEPT
PROCESS MODEL FOR SMALL MEDIUM ENTERPRISE (SME) IN
THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**FACULTY OF TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS
UNIVERSITI TUN HUSSEIN ONN MALAYSIA**

APRIL 2015

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Alhamdulillah, with His Blessings I have finally completed this thesis.

The doctoral journey commenced in 2008 in Perth, at the Curtin University under the supervision of Distinguished Professor Peter E.D. Love and Professor Peter Davis, who provided me with unwavering support and guidance during my time at the university. I really thank both of them for their commitment and encouragement. However, towards the end of my study, I was confronted with new challenges and the arrival of my beloved son, and as a result I temporarily postponed my research. During this difficult period, my beloved wife, my mum, family members, and friends gave unselfishly their valuable time in providing advice and motivation to continue what I had originally set out to achieve.

In 2014, I transferred my Ph.D. study to the Department of Construction Management at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM), where Associate Professor Dr. Narimah Binti Kasim kindly agreed to be my principal supervisor. Associate Professor Dr. Narimah Binti Kasim has provided me with constant support and her advice and guidance enabled me to complete this thesis with confidence. I could not have had a better supervisor.

I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to those who mean most to me; my lovely wife, Hasanah Binti Said, our sons, Auzaie and Afiq, my mum, Rohani Binti Ahmad, and family members for their sacrifices, prayers and patience to make this endeavour successful.

I would like to thank my friend Dr. Azlina Binti Md. Yassin, who had read and critically commented on my drafted work, as well as to all my friends and colleagues at Department of Construction Management, Faculty Technology Management and Business, UTHM.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge my deep appreciation to Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education and UTHM for the financial support and opportunity to complete my study.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the respondents of this research, who gave freely of their insights and their valuable time in helping me throughout my study. My apologies to those people unfairly omitted in this acknowledgement.



ABSTRACT

Small Medium Enterprise (SME) construction organisations are facing very demanding and competitive environment in the construction industry. The demanding and competitiveness of the construction industry required SMEs to be continuously vigilant to current situation and plan to the future. Many of these organisations failed to respond to ever changes environment and some of them were forced to fold their business. These pressures began to force SMEs construction organisation to shift the current short term planning to more strategically planning method such as strategic planning. SME construction organisations should engage in strategic planning activities to enhance their chances of survival and success due to this concept forces organisation to learn and adapt to current environment. Despite high fatality and have only 60 percent of survival rate, many SME construction organisations are reluctant to embrace strategic planning. Therefore, the aim of the study was to develop strategic planning model for guiding SMEs in their future planning. Additionally, the objectives of this research were to identify and investigate the influencing factors and barriers that hinder strategic planning application in SME construction organisations. In satisfying this aim and objective, the research was undertaken in two distinct phases. In phase one, an exploratory study that utilised semi-structured interviews to examine ‘why’ and ‘how’ strategic planning is used in practice by SME construction contractors was undertaken. A total of 22 in-depth interviews were conducted with owners and managers. It was revealed that most firms adopted a myopic and informal approach to strategic planning, with the main barriers to its implementation were plan in owner’s mind, unrealistic, busy, and un-forecast industry. In phase two, the findings from the interviews, in conjunction with the literature, were used to develop series of questions, which were subsequently tested using questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey gathered quantitative data from a total of 133 SMEs regarding strategic planning practices and the factors that influenced its application. A number of non-parametric statistical techniques were used to analyse the data, which included relative index and factor

analysis. The influence factors were identified and ranked by using relative index method (RI). The analysis revealed that five (5) variables that were considered the primary influence factors to strategic planning were people, market, technology, project, and financial. In addition, four (4) barriers including managerial, organisational, planning, and industry issues can be obstacle to the effectiveness of the implementation process of strategic planning. Subsequently, the research developed a generic strategic planning model for SMEs and was validated externally by construction industry practitioners. The proposed model provides basic fundamental for the SMEs in the construction industry to engage strategic planning process to enhance their organisation performance.



ABSTRAK

Organisasi pembinaan Perniagaan Kecil dan Sederhana (PKS) menghadapi persekitaran yang mencabar dan berdaya saing dalam industri pembinaan. Persekitaran industri pembinaan yang mencabar dan berdaya saing memerlukan organisasi PKS dalam industri pembinaan untuk terus berwaspada dengan keadaan semasa dan menyediakan perancangan untuk masa depan. Kebanyakan dari organisasi ini gagal menangani perubahan persekitaran yang sentiasa berlaku dan sesetengah mereka terpaksa menutup operasi perniagaan mereka. Tekanan ini mula memaksa organisasi pembinaan PKS beralih dari perancangan jangka pendek kepada kaedah merancang lebih strategik seperti perancangan strategik. Organisasi pembinaan PKS perlu melibatkan diri dalam aktiviti-aktiviti perancangan strategik untuk meningkatkan peluang mereka untuk kekal dan berjaya kerana konsep ini memaksa organisasi untuk belajar dan menyesuaikan diri dengan persekitaran semasa. Walaupun mempunyai kadar kegagalan yang tinggi dan hanya mempunyai 60 peratus peluang untuk terus kekal dalam perniagaan, banyak organisasi pembinaan PKS enggan menggunakan perancangan strategik. Oleh itu, matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk membangunkan model perancangan strategik untuk membimbing PKS dalam perancangan masa depan mereka. Selain itu, objektif-objektif kajian ini adalah mengenal pasti dan menyiasat faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi dan menghalang penggunaan perancangan strategik dalam organisasi pembinaan PKS. Dalam memenuhi matlamat dan objektif ini, kajian telah dijalankan dalam dua fasa yang berbeza. Dalam fasa pertama, satu kajian penerokaan yang menggunakan temubual separa berstruktur untuk mengkaji 'mengapa' dan 'bagaimana' perancangan strategik yang digunakan dalam amalan oleh kontraktor pembinaan PKS telah dijalankan. Sebanyak 22 temu bual telah diadakan dengan pemilik dan pengurus organisasi. Dapatan temubual mendedahkan bahawa kebanyakan organisasi mengguna pakai pendekatan miopia dan tidak formal untuk perancangan strategik, dengan halangan utama kepada pelaksanaannya adalah rancangan dalam fikiran pemilik, tidak realistik, sibuk, dan industri yang sukar diramal. Dalam fasa kedua, hasil daripada temu bual dan kajian literatur, telah

digunakan untuk membangunkan soalan-soalan, yang kemudiannya diuji dengan menggunakan kajian soal selidik. Kajian soal selidik dikumpul secara kuantitatif daripada sejumlah 133 PKS dalam industri pembinaan mengenai amalan perancangan strategik dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penggunaannya. Beberapa teknik statistik bukan parametrik digunakan untuk menganalisis data, termasuk indeks relatif dan analisis faktor. Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi perancangan strategi telah dikenalpasti dengan menggunakan kaedah indeks relatif (RI). Analisis ini mendedahkan bahawa lima (5) pembolehubah yang dianggap faktor pengaruh utama kepada perancangan strategik adalah pekerja, pasaran, teknologi, projek, dan kewangan. Di samping itu, empat (4) halangan termasuk pengurusan, organisasi, perancangan, dan isu-isu industri boleh menjadi penghalang kepada keberkesanan proses pelaksanaan perancangan strategik. Seterusnya, kajian ini membangunkan satu model generik bagi perancangan strategik untuk PKS dan model ini telah dinilai oleh pengamal industri pembinaan. Model yang dicadangkan menyediakan asas untuk organisasi pembinaan PKS bagi melibatkan diri dalam proses perancangan strategik untuk meningkatkan prestasi organisasi mereka.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABS</i>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<i>IBS</i>	Industrialised Building System
<i>JKR</i>	Jabatan Kerja Raya
<i>PEST</i>	Political, Economic, Social, Technological
<i>SME</i>	Small Medium Enterprise
<i>SPSS</i>	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<i>SWOT</i>	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat



LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE
A	Semi-structured Interview Question
B	Questionnaire
C	Model Evaluation Questionnaire
D	Correlation
E	Relative Index



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PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background and overall content of the whole thesis. It begins with a discussion about research background and problem statement. It continues with reviewing of research questions, aim and objectives, research methodology, and significance of research. Lastly the chapter describes the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Research Background

The concept of strategic planning was originated in the 1950s and became popular between mid-1960s and mid-1970s. During 1950s, Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis dominated strategic planning process. Then, in earlier 1960s, qualitative and quantitative models of strategy replaced SWOT analysis. In late 1960s, Boston Consulting Group (BCG) offered a new look to strategic planning, which views organisation as a portfolio of business. In early 1980s, the shareholder's value model and the Porter's Five Forces model became the standard model for strategic planning. The later stage of the 1980s was dictated by strategic intent and core competencies, and market-focused organizations. Furthermore, in the 1990s, business transformation model became popular in the strategic planning concept. The business transformation model is focused more on organisational adaptability to change, learn, and think. In 2000s the model of strategic planning evolved to response to dynamism of environment conditions (Hax & Majluf, 1991; Gouillart, 1995; Bonn & Christodoulou, 1996; Chinowsky, 2001; David, 2001, Ocasio & Joseph, 2008; Mitchell & Pollard, 2014).

Strategic planning is a long term planning process. This process focuses on formulating organisation strategies and methods to achieve those strategies. The strategy formulation is concerned with current decisions made by organisations that will have effect on the business future. Similarly, strategic planning is about organisational change or paradigm shift. Paradigm shift requires organisation to change current thinking and doing thing to other method for better results. This change is substantial for organisation success when the current practises are proven unreliable. For example, due to the inability of traditional short term planning process to respond to industry's uncertainty and complexity, organisations should have change their planning practice to long term planning such as strategic planning. This is due to strategic planning helps organisations anticipate and lessen adverse influences in the market environment (Taylor, 1973; Betts & Ofori, 1992; Banham, 2010).

Originally, the concept of strategic planning was originated for manufacturing industry and subsequently was introduced to construction sector. Similar to manufacturing industry, the need for strategic planning to construction sector is important due to it encourages long term planning. The need for a strategic planning for construction organisations has long been stressed by numerous researchers (Betts & Ofori, 1992; Warszawski, 1996; Chinowsky & Meredith, 2000; Dikmen & Birgonul, 2003; Ssegawa, 2004). Construction organisations should shift their traditional short term planning to a long term due to the uncertainty and complexity of the construction industry (Lu, 2010). Due to the uncertainty and complexity of the sector, the construction has been considered as a unique industry (Holt, Love & Li, 2000; Price, 2003; Dansoh, 2005). The uniqueness makes the construction industry vulnerable, difficult to manage, and less competitive. However, to remain competitive, an organisation must quickly recognise the changes in environment, be flexible enough to respond to the changes, and understand its own capabilities (Holt *et al.*, 2000). Junnonen (1998) asserts that when dealing with a changing environment, strategy is important to organisations.

The changing environment has occurred due to numerous variables that can influence the construction industry. Some of these influenced variables are technology, people or workers, government policies, and sustainability issues (Lee, 1991; BDW, 2006; Chinowsky *et al.*, 2007; KPMG, 2008). However, these four (4) influenced variables can be analysed, reduced, exploited, and addressed using

strategic planning concept. Strategic planning should make the organisation becoming more 'strategic'. That is being able to meet the challenges of a changing environment by stimulating strategic thinking and strategic analysis (Senge, 1990; LaPiana Associates Inc, 2004). For instance, construction organisations need to be vigilant to survive in the future due to the greater pace of technological changes than before. Perkowski (1988) suggests three (3) strategies related to strategic planning that organisations need to do to lessen the effect of technological changes. The strategies are (i) eager to understand change, (ii) adopt a systems approach to management to control change, and (iii) pursuit a clear competitive advantage strategies.

In addition, as an advocate of long-term planning, Bovis Lend Lease took full advantage of the 2008's global financial turmoil despite other construction organisations struggled to remain competitive (ABC, 2008). Bovis Lend Lease has strategically planned to invest in long-term projects and gains good returns over long-term. Therefore, the company has acquired long-dated United Kingdom (UK) pipeline projects from 2012 to 2020 and are still looking for other international opportunities to make a future investment. The implementation of strategic planning generally has a positive effect on organisation performance (Robinson & Pearce, 1983; Sandberg *et al.*, 2001). Strategic planning implementation can effect organisation performance in financial (e.g. profit) and non financial (management) aspect. Even though there is weak evidence on the direct relationship between strategic planning and organisation financial performance. In addition, nobody can argue that strategic planning encourages knowledge dissemination across management and organisation, and this is the greatest advantage of the concept (Quintas *et al.*, 1997; Drew, 1999; Houben *et al.*, 1999; Shankar *et al.*, 2003).

Furthermore, Lyles *et al.* (1993) found a positive relationship between formal (strategic) planning and the growth rate of sales. Strategic planning is also closely related to the survival of the business (Curtis, 1983; Andendorff *et al.*, 2011). Srivihok and Intrapairrote (2004) state that SMEs can play key roles in the world's economy as the organisations have been contributing to economic growth and employment and in many countries for years. In term of economic growth, SMEs contribution to Australia's Gross Domestic Products (GDP) expanded 3.0% in December 2012 compared to December 2011 (WT Partnership, 2013). Despite that, SMEs are related to high failure rate and poor performance. Many of them were

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